

## Wade-Ins Evolve Into Popular: Community Events

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Since retired Maryland State Senator Bernie Fowler challenged Maryland's Tributary Teams to conduct wade-ins in their watersheds back in 1997, the month of June has unofficially become the "Wade-In Month" across the State of Maryland. Many of the Tributary Teams have embraced the wade-in as their annual public education and outreach event and have strived to make it bigger and better each year. As a result, each watershed's wade-in is evolving and establishing unique traditions while maintaining the core values of the "Sneaker Index." Whatever the day and whichever the watershed, all of the wade-ins can be described by the word "fun."

Many of the wade-ins include a combination of exhibits and activities that educate and engage participants in their local watershed. In addition, some wade-ins are held in conjunction with other watershed events. The Choptank Tributary Team, for example, has held their wade-in in conjunction with the Boat Bums International Cardboard Boat Race to benefit the Maryland Special Olympics. The wade-in is conducted prior to the cardboard boat races in front of some 300 spectators. For the past 3 years, team members and elected officials have also participated in the cardboard boat race and plan to make this an annual tradition.

Elected officials are becoming regular, active participants in many of the wade-ins. The participation and endorsement of these elected officials in the wade-ins helps draw the public and media to the event and raises the level of awareness about the event and the teams. This year, Bernie was joined by Governor Ehrlich, in addition to many other participants and members of the Patuxent River Commission.

Some Tributary Teams have creatively adapted the wade-in to suit their watershed. The Patapsco/Back Tributary Team, for example, conducts a Secchi Dip-In to accommodate the event's urban location. The dip-in was held last year in conjunction with the Baltimore Waterfront Festival at Baltimore's Inner Harbor. On the same day, 15 or so watershed organizations took Secchi readings throughout the Patapsco/Back watershed. The Baltimore City Department of Public Works analyzes and maps this data every year.

There is no doubt the wade-in word is gaining in popularity and prestige. Local wade-ins are starting to catch on statewide. Stay tuned this spring for information about the wade-in, dip-in, fish-in nearest you.

Please contact Heather Adams, the Tributary Strategies administrative aide, with any questions concerning this year's Wade In schedule at [hadams@dnr.state.md.us](mailto:hadams@dnr.state.md.us) or 410-260-8711. The attached link will take you to the MD Dept. of Natural Resources Calendar of events: <http://dnrweb.dnr.state.md.us/dnrsp/websurvey/dnrcalendar>